

Tips for networking with potential advisors

General tips:

- **Use professional email etiquette.** For example, it is better to start your emails with a formal greeting like “Dear Professor Last Name,” or “Dear Dr. Last Name,” rather than “Hi” or “Hey First Name”.
- **Check your grammar and spelling** before sending. Read your writing aloud to see if it sounds clear and professional.
- Brief emails are often more effective and readable than long ones, so try to **keep it concise** (<250 words).
- Provide a description of **yourself and your background**, and **why you are pursuing graduate studies**. No need to include everything, this introduction is like your “elevator pitch” to encourage the faculty member to read your full CV.
- Say a little about **why you are interested in working with the potential advisor**. You might read one or two recent papers they coauthored, then comment on some aspect of their work that aligns with your interests and goals.
- If you don’t receive a response for a few weeks, **it is OK to send a follow-up email** (or even two). No response doesn’t necessarily mean a faculty member is uninterested, your email may have gotten lost in their inbox.
- It is **OK to contact multiple faculty members** with similar research interests within a given department, but you shouldn’t email everyone, this might make you seem unfocused/unclear about your career goals.
- For more tips, Professor Jacquelyn Gill at University of Maine has a helpful blog post on this topic: <https://contemplativemammoth.com/2013/04/08/so-you-want-to-go-to-grad-school-nail-the-inquiry-email/>

Example Inquiry Email:

From: Susan Squid (ssquid@gmail.com)
To: Bob Blobfish (blobfish@cousteau.edu)
Subject: Prospective Graduate Student Inquiry

Use good email etiquette!
 A serious email address,
 descriptive subject line
 and professional greeting
 are essential.

Dear Professor BlobFish,

My name is Sue Squid, and I am a **senior undergraduate student** at Atlantis University graduating with a B.S. in Fisheries Science in June 2021. Currently, I am working on a senior thesis focused on mapping habitat suitability for hydrothermal vent organisms under the direction of my advisor, Professor Tammy Tubeworm. I am applying to graduate programs in **biological oceanography and ecology** this fall, with the goal of enrolling in a **thesis-based Masters program**. Ultimately, I aim to work as a **researcher in the state or federal government**. My CV with more information is attached for your consideration.

Be clear about your goals for graduate school and beyond. What degree program are you interested in, what do you want to study and what are your career goals?

I am emailing because your lab’s research focus aligns well with my interests in **odd deep sea organisms**, and I am very interested in learning more about your work. I read your recent paper in *Ugly Fish Letters* on the new method you developed for estimating blobfish populations, and thought it had many exciting applications. **Have you considered applying this method to colossal squid?** If you plan on accepting new graduate students this upcoming year, I am very interesting in discussing opportunities in your lab.

Sincerely,
 Sue Squid

By providing some information about your background and experience (and attaching a CV), you help potential advisors evaluate whether you are a good fit for their lab

Why do you want to work with this particular faculty member? Show that you understand and are familiar with the potential advisor’s work, and highlight how your interests overlap.